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Letter dated 10 May 2005 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

The United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP) was established to assist the post-conflict stabilization in Tajikistan, at the request of the Government. Following the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan in 2000, UNTOP provides the political framework and leadership for peacebuilding activities of the United Nations system in Tajikistan. Together with the United Nations country team and in cooperation with the Tajik authorities at all levels, political parties, civil society and donor countries, the Office works towards establishing the necessary conditions and self-sustaining national mechanisms that make the peace process irreversible. In this respect, UNTOP facilitates the continuation of national dialogue and reconciliation, actively assists in strengthening democratic institutions and conflict prevention mechanisms, promotes the rule of law and contributes to building national capacity in the area of human rights.

During the past five years of peacebuilding, Tajik society has come along way in healing the wounds of civil war. However, much remains to be done in strengthening national unity and consolidating peace. To this end, in 2004, UNTOP, in cooperation with the central and local authorities, organized eight political discussion club sessions in all regions of the country. More than 1,000 government officials, political party activists and representatives of civil society participated in the sessions, which fostered new forms of social partnership between the Government and civil society, with the effect of making local government more transparent and accountable to citizens. The sessions enabled political parties to present their platforms during the pre-electoral period and brought about the adoption of amendments to Tajik electoral law that are more in accord with international standards. UNTOP continued to play a unique role of quiet facilitation, particularly on the most delicate and contentious of issues.

At the recommendation of a United Nations Electoral Needs Assessment Mission, UNTOP developed and supervised the implementation of a technical assistance project for the parliamentary elections of February 2005. More than 13,000 poll workers and 300 district election commissioners were trained in electoral procedures across all 41 districts of Tajikistan, while more than 250 local media representatives were briefed on electoral procedures and relevant laws. The project was the most substantial input to strengthening the national electoral administration since the country attained independence in 1991.

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With a view to building national capacity in conflict prevention, UNTOP organized the training of 20 Tajik instructors who, in turn, prepared more than 220 local government officials, political party activists, media representatives and community leaders in the effective application of conflict prevention and resolution mechanisms.

To strengthen respect for the rule of law, the Office facilitated the reform and transition of national law enforcement agencies to peacetime policing. UNTOP's civilian police and human rights advisers organized training for staff of the Ministry of the Interior in human rights standards, forensic techniques and modern practices in law enforcement, arranging under one project the preparation of 40 instructors from the Ministry of the Interior, who trained 1,080 staff of the Ministry throughout the country. The Office also provided technical assistance and study courses for staff of the Ministry in police academies of Eastern European countries.

In the field of human rights, UNTOP assisted in building national capacities in treaty reporting and implementation, legal protection for citizens and human rights awareness. The Office facilitated the preparation of national reports on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; and both International Covenants on Human Rights. The preparation of the reports fostered dialogue and cooperation between the Government, non-governmental organizations and civil society.

UNTOP supported the Government in implementing treaty obligations through the reform of national legislation and, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, strengthening human rights standards and adherence to them in the judiciary and the civil service. In addition to coordinating human rights activities among local and international actors in Tajikistan, the Office closely monitored human rights developments in the country and advised the authorities on politically sensitive cases.

In view of the important and very positive role being played by UNTOP, as well as the country's continuing need for support in its post-conflict peacebuilding efforts, and in response to the request of the Government of Tajikistan, it is my intention to continue the activities of UNTOP for a further period of one year, until 1 June 2006.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter to the attention of the members of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Kofi A. **Annan**